THE NEW AVENGERS

LUKE CAGE

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LIMITED SERIES

ARCUDI
CANETE
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NEW YORK CITY, MIDTOWN
YOU LITTLE GEEKS ARE WASTING YOUR TIME!
I HAVE TO SAY, HE'S REALLY GOT A POINT. WHERE'S OUR BIG GEEK?
CAGE? NOT SURE. SAW HIM A SECOND AGO.
YOU KNOW, THE ONLY REASON I JOINED THE AVENGERS WAS TO GET SOMEBODY ELSE TO DO ALL THE HEAVY LIFTING.
--SHE'S LEODIS DYSON'S MOTHER, LUKE. SAID SHE HOPED YOU'D REMEMBER HER.
YEAH, SURE I DO.
LISTEN, JESSICA, I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF SOMETHING. CAN YOU CALL BACK IN, LIKE, FIVE MINTUES?
BUT CALL ON CLINT'S PHONE.
WHY HIS?
'CAUSE IN A SECOND, I DON'T THINK MINE'LL BE WORKING.

THIS FIGHT'S A JOKE! ALL YOU'RE DOING IS GIVING ME A WORKOUT.
YEAH, WELL WE'VE BEEN WORRIED ABOUT YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE, HIPPO OLD BOY.
UH, SPIDEY--
AGREED, RONIN, MY FRIEND. IMPACT IN...
ONE!
TOWN WITHOUT PITY
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HMM. SEEMS TO HAVE WORKED.
IT WAS EITHER THAT OR TRADE PUNCHES WITH THE GOON ALL DAY.
AND THIS WAY, WE CAN STILL CATCH "JUDGE JUDY."
GOOD THINKING.
FORCE EQUALS MASS TIMES ACCELERATION, RIGHT? YOU'RE ABOUT TWO HUNDRED KILOS ACCELERATING AT SOMETHING LIKE THIRTY METERS PER SEC--
DO YOU EVER SHUT UP?
UHHHHHH, TRICK QUESTION, RIGHT?
HEY, LUKE!
IT'S JESS.
WHY'S SHE CALLING YOU ON MY PHONE?

LUCAS, YOU CAN'T JUST RUSH OFF AND HELP EVERYBODY FROM YOUR PAST THAT CALLS.
AND WHO IS HE, ANYWAY? YOU NEVER EVEN MENTIONED LEODIS DYSON BEFORE.
HE'S FROM BACK IN THE DAY, BEFORE I KNEW YOU. HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HIM SINCE.
THAT'S A LONG TIME AGO!
I'M SORRY YOUR FRIEND GOT BANGED UP, BUT LOOK AT YOUR LIFE NOW. YOU'VE GOT PLENTY TO DO HERE.
HE WASN'T JUST "BANGED UP," JESS. AND HE WASN'T MY FRIEND, EXACTLY.
"THIS WAS WHEN I WAS JUST GETTING STARTED IN MY BUSINESS--
HERO FOR HIRE
LUKE CAGE
"BACK WHEN HARLEM WAS A LOT HARDER THAN IT IS NOW."
"FOLKS WERE HAPPY TO HAVE A HERO AROUND--EVEN IF I WAS DOING IT FOR THE MONEY."
HEY, POWER MAN. HOW YOU BEEN?
"BUT THAT MADE ME MORE NORMAL. MORE LIKE THEY WERE."

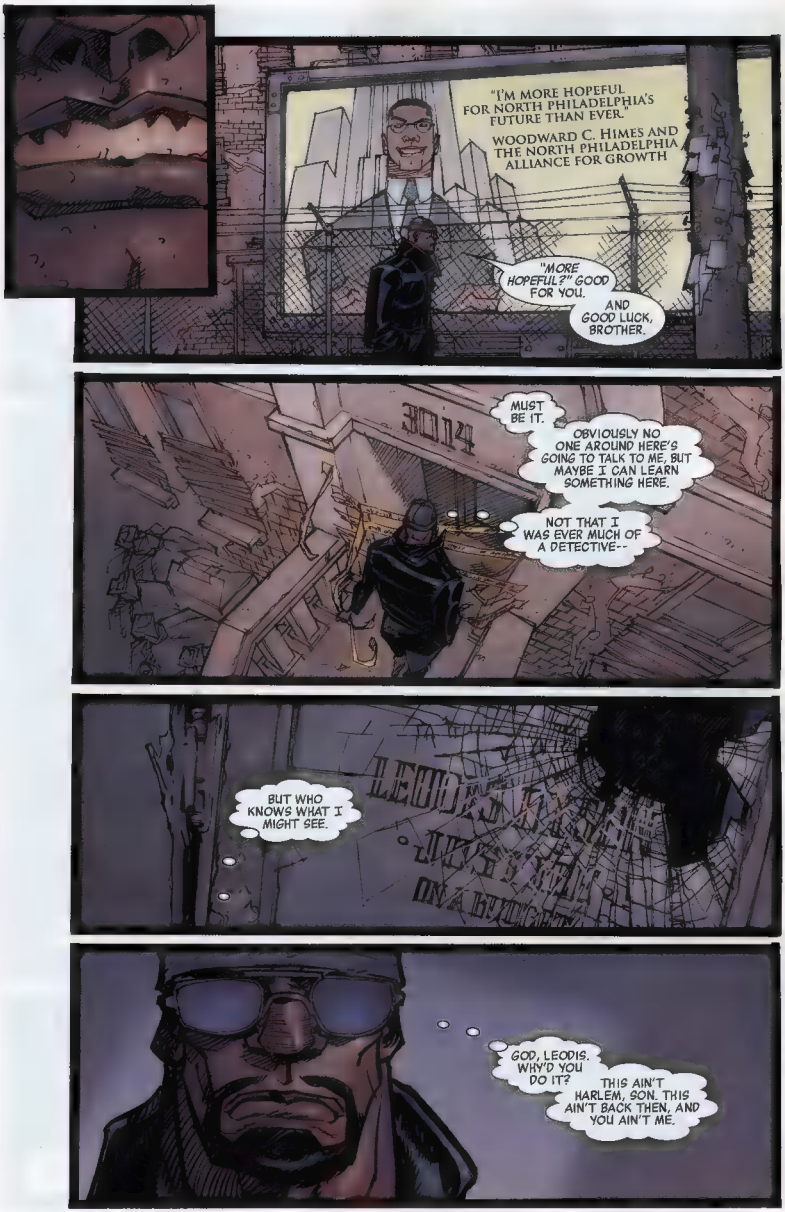
"I WAS NEVER TRYING TO BE A ROLE MODEL. JUST SORTA WORKED OUT THAT WAY, I GUESS."
HEY, MR. CAGE! HOLD UP.
MY MOM SAYS "HI," AND THAT THIS IS JUST THE FIRST PAYMENT.
FIFTY DOLLARS?! LEODIS, YOU AND YOUR MOTHER CAN'T AFFORD TO GIVE ME THAT.
BUT WE HIRED YOU-- AND YOU HELPED US, AND...AND WE DON'T TAKE NO CHARITY.
IT'S NOT CHARITY, SON.
YOU'LL PAY ME WHEN YOU CAN AFFORD IT-- WHEN YOU FIND A JOB, OKAY?
YOU JUST TALKIN' NOW, BUT I'M GONNA DO THAT! YOU'LL SEE.
I KNOW YOU WILL. AND SAY "HI" BACK FOR ME.
"SEE, BECAUSE I DID TRY TO BE GENEROUS."

HIS MOTHER TOLD ME THAT MUCH.
DID SHE TELL YOU THAT LEODIS IS ON LIFE SUPPORT AFTER GETTING "BANGED UP"?
SHE DIDN'T SAY THAT.
SHE PROBABLY DIDN'T TELL YOU WHY HE TOOK THAT BEATIN', EITHER.
TRYING TO BE ME, THAT'S HOW.
HE SET UP HIS OWN "HERO-FOR-HIRE" BUSINESS IN PHILADELPHIA. SORTA LIKE A CROSS BETWEEN A PRIVATE EYE AND A BODYGUARD.
NOW HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO TURN MY BACK ON THAT? IT'S LIKE I LED HIM TO IT.
YOU SEE WHAT I'M SAYING, DON'T YOU?
YES, OKAY, BUT...
BUT WHAT?
THIS AIN'T LIKE YOU AT ALL, JESS. A YEAR AGO, YOU WOULD'VE PACKED FOR ME. WHY'RE YOU KICKIN' NOW?

EVERYTHING WE'VE BEEN THROUGH THESE LAST MONTHS. THE TIME WE'VE SPENT APART, THE WAR, THIS OSBORN BUSINESS...
SOMETIMES, IT'S...TOO MUCH, LUCAS.
JESS, WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? ARE YOU--
NO, NOTHING LIKE THAT. I JUST WANT US TO BE A FAMILY. I WANT US TO BE TOGETHER.
JUST FOR A LITTLE WHILE.
OKAY, BABY. OKAY, I GET IT.
BUT IT'S ONLY PHILLY--NOT PAKISTAN.
I'VE BEEN TO AN EAGLE'S GAME. PHILLY'S WORSE.
JUST LET ME GO FOR A COUPLE DAYS, FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED. AND THEN, I PROMISE, YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO GET RID OF ME.
ALL RIGHT.

"BUT ONLY A COUPLE OF DAYS."
HOW LONG'S IT BEEN SINCE I'VE SEEN PHILLY?
WONDER IF THAT EGYPTIAN PIZZA JOINT'S STILL ON RIDGE.
NORTH PHILADELPHIA. THIS STOP IS--
NICE TOWN, BUT I DON'T RECOGNIZE LEODIS'S ADDRESS. WHY DID HE CHOOSE THIS NEIGHBORHOOD?
"--NORTH PHILADELPHIA!"
DAMN!
I'D SAY LEODIS WAS JUST FOLLOWING THE NEED.

THIS AREA'S GOT A LONG WAY TO GO. MAKES THE BAD OLD DAYS IN HARLEM LOOK, WELL, NOT SO BAD.
AT LEAST THE KIDS SELLING DOPE BACK THEN WEREN'T THIS YOUNG.
WHACHOO LOOKIN' AT, OLD MAN?
YOU OUT THIS WAY FOR A REASON? SOMETHIN' YOU WANT?!
YOU WANNA HELP ME? GREAT.
3014 PREID STREET. THAT AROUND HERE?
THE #@*% I LOOK LIKE?! A DAMN PHONE BOOK?
GET ON WITH YA'!
HARD LITTLE PUNKS, BUT WHY NOT?
NOT A LOT TO LOSE FOR THEM. I'VE BEEN THERE.


"I'M MORE HOPEFUL FOR NORTH PHILADELPHIA'S FUTURE THAN EVER."
WOODWARD C. HIMES AND THE NORTH PHILADELPHIA ALLIANCE FOR GROWTH
"MORE HOPEFUL?" GOOD FOR YOU.
AND GOOD LUCK, BROTHER.
3014
MUST BE IT.
OBVIOUSLY NO ONE AROUND HERE'S GOING TO TALK TO ME, BUT MAYBE I CAN LEARN SOMETHING HERE.
NOT THAT I WAS EVER MUCH OF A DETECTIVE--
BUT WHO KNOWS WHAT I MIGHT SEE.
GOD, LEODIS. WHY'D YOU DO IT?
THIS AIN'T HARLEM, SON. THIS AIN'T BACK THEN, AND YOU AIN'T ME.

THIS WASN'T A BEATING. THIS WAS A MESSAGE.
NOT JUST TO LEODIS. TO ANYBODY WHO CAME SNIFFING AROUND FOR A LONG TIME TO COME.
WOW! WHAT DID THEY USE? A PILE DRIVER?
I REMEMBER YOU.
AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE IN NEW YORK FIGHTING KLINGONS?
YOU CHOSE A LOUSY SPOT FOR A VACATION.
AIN'T NO VACATION.
YOU GOT THAT RIGHT.

YOU'RE IN NORTH PHILLY NOW, BOY! NO HEROES AROUND TO HELP YOU.
NOT EVEN THE COPS COME HERE.
WHAT WOULD I NEED THEM FOR, HAMMERHEAD?
WHAM!
I DON'T EVEN WANT THE POLICE. THAT AIN'T WHAT THIS IS ABOUT!
I'M HERE FOR LEODIS DYSON, AND I GOT MY OWN MESSAGE TO SEND!
YOU'RE GONNA UNDERSTAND THAT IF YOU MESS WITH THAT MAN, YOU MESS WITH ME!

YOU BEGINNING TO SEE WHAT I'M SAYIN'?!
WHAP!
CRASH!
WHAT...? WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM? WHEN'D HE GET THIS STRONG?

SO YOU'RE HERE FOR DYSON? THAT'S HOW YOU'RE PLAYING IT NOW.
KLANG!
YOU WANT TO RETURN TO YOUR ROOTS? FINE BY ME.
BUT NOT ON MR. NEGATIVE'S TURF.

BAKOOM!
OOF!
"ROOTS," HUH? YEAH, I GET IT.
IN FACT, YOU'RE MAKING ME ALL NOSTALGIC FOR THE OLD DAYS, FLATTOP--

--BACK WHEN YOU DID A LOT MORE HEAD-RAMMING--
CAGE
--AND A LOT LESS MOUTH-TALKING!

BACK WHEN I KICKED THE CRAP OUTTA YOU!
SORRY, "M'MAN."
THOSE DAYS ARE OVER.
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, SO YOU'RE A LOT TOUGHER THAN YOU USED TO BE.
BUT I AIN'T ANY *LESS* TOUGH, SO HOW YOU THINK THIS IS GONNA GO?
WOOP WOOP
AND THE COPS *ARE* COMING.
FIGURE AN UNREGISTERED HERO DOESN'T NEED TO [redacted] AROUND WHEN THEY SHOW UP ANYMORE THAN I DO.
I HAVE... THINKING... TO DO.
"THINKING?"
YOU REALLY HAVE CHANGED.

I FEEL LIKE I SHOULD GO AFTER HIM, BUT I MAYBE DID AS MUCH DAMAGE AS I CAN.
TO HIM AND TO THE HOOD, LOOKS LIKE.
I CAN'T LEAVE IT A WRECK LIKE THIS...
I NEVER DID FIND OUT WHY HE CAME AFTER LEODIS, THOUGH, OR WHAT HE MEANT BY ROOTS--EH?
HARD LITTLE PUNKS AGAIN. I'D ASK THEM IF I THOUGHT THEY'D TALK, BUT...
ALL RIGHT! WHO'S HELPING THE ANGRY SUPER HERO CLEAN THIS UP?

30TH STREET STATION,
CENTER CITY PHILADELPHIA.
THAT'S CORRECT.
HE WAS THERE TO TAKE OVER FOR DYSON. HE SAID IT HIMSELF, RIGHT OUT LOUD, LIKE HE WANTED EVERYBODY TO KNOW IT.
LUKE CAGE? ARE YOU SURE?
DEAD SURE. LOST HIS HAIR, BUT THAT'S THE ONLY SIGN OF AGE THAT BRUISER'S SHOWING.

IT DOESN'T QUITE MAKE SENSE.
I'M INCLINED TO AGREE.
BUT HE STARTED OUT IN THE GUTTER. MAYBE HE'S COMING BACK.
THIS WILL MAKE THINGS A GREAT DEAL MORE DIFFICULT.
THE APPEAL OF PHILADELPHIA FOR EXPANSION WAS THE RELATIVE EASE OF IT.
I'M NOT AFRAID OF HARD WORK, SIR. AND I'M CERTAINLY NOT AFRAID--
CATCH THE NEXT TRAIN BACK.
PHILADELPHIA WILL ALWAYS BE THERE.
AND WE CAN AFFORD TO BE PATIENT.

MR. CAGE, LOOK AT YOU!
WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO? I SAID I WANTED TO YOU TO COME DOWN AND SEE LEODIS. NOTHING ELSE.
I'M SORRY, MRS. DYSON. I WENT TO CHECK OUT LEODIS'S OFFICE, AND... BELIEVE ME, I DIDN'T PLAN IT THIS WAY.
HOW IS HE?
THEY TOOK THAT TUBE OUT OF HIS MOUTH, SO HE'S BREATHING ON HIS OWN AGAIN.
THEY TELL ME THAT'S A GOOD SIGN--
"--BUT I'LL KEEP PRAYING JUST THE SAME."
HEY, SON. BEEN AWHILE, HUH?
MR. CAGE!.. WHAT ARE YOU--
TAKE IT EASY, NOW. DOCTORS DON'T WANT YOU GETTING WORKED UP.

I KNOW... I KNOW I MESSED UP...I COULDN'T DO IT...
NO SHAME, THERE, SON. A GUY LIKE HAMMERHEAD, THE FACT THAT YOU'RE STILL ALIVE TELLS ME YOU'RE A LOT TOUGHER THAN YOU THINK.
BUT YOU DON'T GOT TO WORRY ON HIM ANYMORE. I MADE SURE HE GOT THE MESSAGE TO MOVE THE HELL ON.
NO...NO... YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.
I DESERVED THIS.
I DESERVED WORSE THAN THIS.
TO BE CONTINUED.

NEXT!

CAT FIGHT!

THUNDERBOLTS #144

TEAM BUILDING EXERCISES!
ON-SALE IN MAY!

DAREDEVIL: CAGE MATCH SPECIAL

THROWBACK WEEK!
ON-SALE IN MAY!

NEW AVENGERS: LUKE CAGE #3

SHOWDOWN IN THE CITY OF BROTHERLY SHOVE!
ON-SALE IN JUNE!

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